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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 003867

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FROM AIT KAOHSIUNG BRANCH OFFICE

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SUBJECT: LY ELECTION: DPP COULD GAIN BIG IN KAOHSIUNG COUNTY

Classified By: ROBERT W. FORDEN, AIT KAOHSIUNG PRINCIPAL OFFICER.

REASON: 1.5(d).

Summary

1. (C) The Pan-Green could pick up two or even three Legislative Yuan (LY) seats in Kaohsiung County at the expense of the Kuomintang (KMT). Kaohsiung County's nine LY seats currently are split 5-4 in favor of the Pan-Blue, but the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) is confident it can effectively allocate votes among its five candidates this time to get all elected. The Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) is also hopeful it can draw votes from former supporters of LY Speaker Wang Jyn-ping to get two TSU candidates elected. Two People First Party (PFP) candidates also appear strong due to strong "mainlander" and local faction support. Added Pan-Green seats are likely to come at the expense of the KMT, which could lose some or all of its seats in Kaohsiung County, if LY Speaker Wang is unable to steer his traditional vote base to the other KMT candidates. End summary.

Kaohsiung County -- Opportunity for Green Gains

2. (C) In recent meetings with AIT/K, Kaohsiung County KMT and DPP Chairmen agreed that the KMT faced a serious challenge in trying to hold onto the three LY seats it currently has in Kaohsiung County. Currently, the KMT and DPP each hold three seats, the PFP has two and the TSU, one. However, this distribution of seats did not directly reflect the 2001 vote, in which the Pan-Green actually drew far more votes than the Pan-Blue in Kaohsiung County. The poor Green showing four years ago instead reflected its poor nomination and vote allocation strategy. For example, in 2001, one of the DPP's candidates, Lin Tai-hua, the young, attractive daughter of an influential local political figure, managed to draw over 70,000 votes, even though it was her first time running. Had Lin's votes been spread in part to other Pan-Green candidates, the DPP would have picked up 1-2 other seats at the expense of two KMT candidates that barely squeaked by.

3. (C) To avoid a repeat of 2001, the DPP is urging its supporters to spread their votes evenly across the DPP's five candidates, Kaohsiung County DPP Secretary General Tsai Yung-chang told AIT/K. Tsai said the Kaohsiung County DPP office was conducting careful polling each week to determine the level of support for each of its five candidates. If the polls show more than a 10 percent difference in support between the highest and lowest of the candidates, it will instruct supporters to shift votes to even up the candidates. Tsai said, however, that the DPP would not coordinate vote allocation with the TSU because the DPP feared its votes would be spread too thinly and cost it a seat. Based on the latest polling and assuming effective vote allocation, Tsai predicted all five DPP candidates would win.

TSU Hopes to Pick Up a Second Seat from KMT Base

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4. (C) The TSU has also fielded strong candidates, DPP SG Tsai said. TSU incumbent Lin Chi-lung came in third in 2001

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and remain very strong. The other TSU candidate, Huang Wan-chuan, had come close to being elected in 2001. Huang, an associate of the politically-powerful Yu family in Kaohsiung County (former Taiwan Interior Minister Yu Chen-hsien, incumbent LY Yu Cheng-tao, and others) has strong backing from important local factions. With Lee Teng-hui's active intervention, the TSU has high hopes that Huang can draw votes away from LY Speaker Wang Jyn-ping's traditional base. While DPP SG Tsai worried that there may not be enough Pan-Green votes in Kaohsiung County to support all seven Pan-Green candidates, he thought there was still a chance TSU candidate Huang could pull enough votes from the Pan-Blue side that all seven Green candidates would win.

KMT Seeks to Limit Loss to One Seat

15. (C) For most of the same reasons cited by the DPP, Kaohsiung County KMT Chairman Chuan Sung-won told AIT/K he also judged the KMT to have an uphill battle to hold onto its seats. The KMT had played it conservatively this time, nominating only its two incumbents, Lin Yi-shih and Chen Li-huei, plus one former LY member, Wu Kuang-shun, to try to hold Wang's seat (LY Speaker Wang is running this time as a KMT at-large candidate). Of the three KMT candidates, Chen Li-huei is weakest in the polls. Chen barely won in 2001, benefiting from the split Pan-Green vote.

16. (C) KMT Chairman Chuan worried that several independents, while unlikely to win, could pull significant numbers of votes from all the Pan-Blue candidates. The strongest of the independents is Huang Hsi-wen, a former County Council Member who had been expelled by the KMT after helping his father run for County Magistrate as an independent against the KMT choice. Huang could draw away a significant number of votes, particularly ones that traditionally have gone to LY Speaker Wang Jyn-ping.

PFP -- Good Chance to Hold Onto Its Two Seats

17. (C) While the KMT situation is difficult, most in Kaohsiung County see the PFP candidates as strong. Pan-Blue and Pan-Green officials all told AIT/K that PFP incumbent Chao Lian-yen would likely be re-elected with a significant percentage of the Kaohsiung County "mainlander" vote, estimated to be about 50,000. The other PFP candidate, incumbent Chung Shao-ho, was Hakka from the Meinung District of Kaohsiung and would receive strong support there. While the Hakka vote, around 30,000, was not sufficient by itself to re-elect him, it got him close enough to make a win likely. It took 33,000 votes to win a Kaohsiung County LY seat in the 2001 election and most expected a similar threshold this time.

Comment -- Vote Allocation Strategy Key to Green Gains

18. (C) Kaohsiung County promises to be one of the best opportunities for the Pan-Green to pick up seats in the upcoming LY election. It is a good example of how nomination strategies and vote allocation can influence the outcome of Taiwan's multi-member district legislative elections. In neighboring Kaohsiung City in 2001, the Pan-Green gained more seats than its vote totals would have otherwise supported, because the KMT split its votes among too many candidates. Kaohsiung County, on the other hand, generated a higher than expected number of seats for the KMT in 2001 because the Pan-Green did not correctly adjust its votes among its candidates. Should the Pan-Green succeed this time in taking as many as 6-7 of Kaohsiung County's LY seats, it will be less an indication of Pan-Green gains in voter support than a reconfirmation of the effectiveness of strategic planning in candidate selection and vote allocation.

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